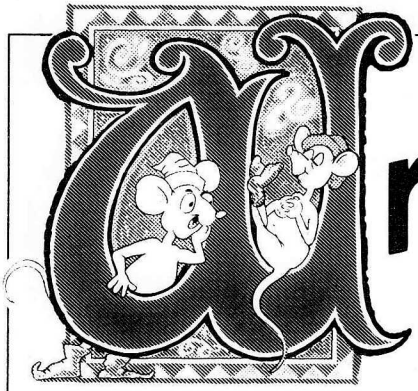
RM User

Volume 6:4
October 1991

The magazine of the RM User Group



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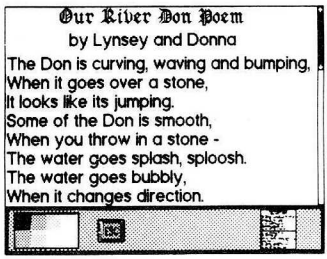
For the beginner . . .


Our River Don Poem
by Lynsey and Donna
The Don is curving, waving and bumping,
When it goes over a stone,
It looks like its jumping.
Some of the Don is smooth,
When you throw in a stone -
The water goes splash, sploosh.
The water goes bubbly,
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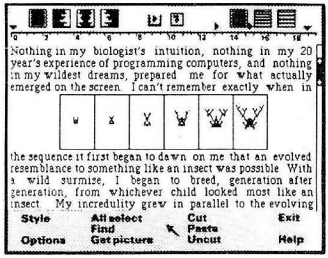
Nothing in my biologist's intuition, nothing in my 20 year's experience of programming computers, and nothing in my wildest dreams, prepared me for what actually emerged on the screen. I can't remember exactly when in
the sequence it first began to dawn on me that an evolved resemblance to something like an insect was possible. With a wild surmise, I began to breed, generation after generation, from whichever child looked most like an insect. My incredulity grew in parallel to the evolving
Style
All select
Cut
Exit
Find
Paste
Options
Get picture
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Help Line

According to the constitution the User Group exists *to promote the interchange of information and ideas between users of [RM] microcomputers.* There are two main ways in which this can happen. One of these is by using the magazine as a forum in which letters, articles or just short thoughts can be expressed and shared with other members. The other, and the more immediate, is to use the help line.

The User Group contains a great body of expertise and the Help Line exists as a channel for spreading knowledge and especially answers to your problems.

How does this differ from RM's Customer Support telephone service? Firstly, you can telephone the User Group members in the evening or at weekends when RM is shut (and, of course, you are just bound to hit problems). Secondly, RM don't claim to have great knowledge of products which they don't produce such as Excel or PageMaker. They can tell you how to install the packages on their equipment and how to get started but they cannot be expected to give you in depth support on using the the packages. We, on the other hand, can. Most of the people whose phone numbers are listed on page 42 are using the contents of the educational software library on a daily basis. We may have met exactly the problem you have just encountered.

If you are in difficulty, please feel free to ring anybody on the Committee; John and Helen Williams have an answering machine so you can always leave a message there. It is a great help if you are having a problem doing something using your computer if you can be next to it when you phone because it may then be possible to talk you through a solution over the phone.

If your problem is not urgent, or you think it may be difficult to explain over the phone, then do please write to the Editor with your query. I will either reply to you directly or pass your query on to a better person to solve it or publish your letter in the next magazine as a request for help.

If you have had a problem which you have solved for yourself then please share your knowledge; your solution is quite likely to be useful to someone else, even if you think it is trivial; remember that many of our members are new to using RM equipment.

Finally, you can also telephone Keith Whiddon on 0403 217339 regarding Nimbus problems or Tim Philips on 0284 706233 regarding PC186 or 380z problems. Both numbers are home numbers and we are grateful to Keith and Tim for allowing their numbers to be published.

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News and Editorial

At the Annual General Meeting way back in March, RM talked about Net 3.1 and Windows 3 for the network which would come with it. I wrote about this at the time. In July I wrote that it was finally available (having foolishly believed what Sales Desk told me). I think I can truthfully say that it is now available (I certainly have it!) but whether or not all users who ordered it have yet received it is another matter. I'm not sure what happened; I've heard that there were problems with getting the documentation printed. I don't know if this is the case or whether there were problems discovered late on with the software or if there was some other reason for the long delay in shipping but I sincerely hope that RM learn from this disaster. I, in common I'm sure with many other network managers in education, don't like making major changes to the network during the year. The best time to make changes is during the summer holidays so that when term starts everything is running smoothly. The copy of Net 3.1 which I ordered in late June was finally delivered in mid-September, which makes this difficult!

Enough moans (for now!). Has the wait been worthwhile? Well, Windows certainly works (but see David Palmer's article on page ?? for another user's thoughts about it) and it is fast enough for most operations. I'm using an AX server with 4Mb of memory and most operations on a station are nearly as fast as on a standalone machine; certainly the system is perfectly usable. Loading takes longer than on a standalone - about 20-25 seconds to get to program manager on a network compared to about 10-15 seconds standalone. If you're not using Windows then the changes are for the most part quite transparent; the server just works with fewer problems. Netman is still same problem it has always been (still no facility to produce lists of users with passwords, no facility to import users etc., etc. Thank goodness for NMS!) Running Windows demands that each user has their own identity; for even a small school allocating user ids means a lot of typing if you use NETMAN. I understand that there are no plans to improve it and this, I feel, is a mistake. Contact Edhitec (0423 871027) for details of NMS which does all the things a network manager needs done and Netman does not provide. An aside. I have two servers each with about 500 users. I started one, loaded NETMAN and added a user. I pressed F9 to quit and save changes then booted another station from the other server, loaded NMS, added a user and exited. NMS finished before NETMAN. I think this says something about the relative speed of the two programs.

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On a happier note, RM are now close to finishing their enhanced version of LAN Manager for the schools' market (the standard Microsoft version has been available to HE/FE for some time but is not exactly user friendly). I'm told that this has been the biggest product RM have ever worked on, using up much engineering development time. I'm sure that when it appears it will be good (most of RM's products are; Net 3.1 *is* good it was just late), I just hope that it appears on time and at a reasonable price. I understand that it will be shown at BETT in January. More in the next issue, I hope.

RM have reduced the price of Brother printers, some by very large amounts. The 9 pin M1309 is down to £149 and the 24 pin M1824 is down £114 to £285. The HL4 laser printer is down to £630 and the HL8PS PostScript laser printer is down to £1455, a reduction of £720. These prices now compare favourably with the major discounters (a quick flick through adverts didn't give me any lower prices except for the HL4 which I found at £610) and the big advantage of buying from RM is that if it doesn't work with the computer you've bought then Customer Support can't blame you for buying an odd printer (see also David Palmer's article!) RM are also selling the Brother HJ100 inkjet printer at £220. This is an A4 sized printer so goes well with the notebooks but I think it would probably also be useful if you just don't want a cluttered desk. I've not used the printer so I can't comment on its quality or speed but the majority of inkjet printers now seem to give excellent quality at an acceptable speed.

RM have been having some major success internationally. They have won a contract to supply Kuwait's rebuilt schools with nearly £4 million worth of equipment. This comprises over 100 networks including about 2500 M series PC286 machines. Each network is served by an RM SystemBase 486 server with 8Mb RAM and 300Mb drive. The software included seems to be the standard Educational Software Library with the addition of an Arabic version of Microsoft Works and some other educational packages.

RM have just announced details of a Windows based package called The Music Sequencer for the PC186. With the addition of a Midi interface to the computer, it allows music to be played on the keyboard and then edit the "recording". Music can also be placed by picking notes from a menu with the mouse and putting them in place. Editing can be achieved on a note by note basis or whole tracks can be transposed. It is possible to control up to 16 sounds simultaneously. Unfortunately I don't have a price for the package but details are available from RM on 0865 791234.

Microsoft have just launched the Windows version of Works. It looks very promising but I've not had a chance to have a good go with it. It contains a word processor, looking like a cut down Word for Windows (and capable of exchanging files with it), a spreadsheet with charting facilities a flat file database, a simple drawing section and a set of templates called Works Wizards. It loses the communications section of Works for Dos but then you've got Windows Terminal anyway to do that job. I see no reason why it shouldn't work on a PC186 (it doesn't need standard mode) so it could be a good introduction to working with Windows; packages like Superbase 4 are excellent but something of an overkill for beginners. Contact Microsoft (0734 500741) for more details.

PFS: Window Works is another integrated package running under Windows 3. It includes Publishers Powerpak which is a font enhancer (giving fonts from 6-127 points on screen and printer) which can be used with any Windows application. The disadvantage compared to Microsoft Works is that it will only run on a 286 or better machine. Details from Edhitec (0423 871027) who, incidentally, are now official suppliers of Microsoft products at educational prices.

WordStar for Windows has also been launched. This looks excellent and narrows even further the gap between word processing and desk top publishing. On screen it looks similar to the other Windows word processors; there is a tool bar across the top and a set of buttons giving access to various drawing and manipulation tools. The menus work in the normal Windows manner but, for WordStar devotees, the familiar key strokes will still work - CTRL KR is used to read in a file if you don't want to click on File Import, for example. You can even choose to have the program compatible with "classic" WordStar, WordStar 2000 or WordStar laptop. Text looks good on screen because the product includes FaceLift from Bitstream with 13 scalable fonts. Text can also be rotated to any angle in (I think) 0.1° increments. You can edit text in actual size mode or at magnifications ranging from 25% to 200%. When you've finished playing(!) there is a comprehensive spell checker and thesaurus to help make sure your work is correct and even a grammar checker included to make sure that the English is grammatically correct. WordStar for Windows has an RRP of £399 (which is aout the same as most word processors; expect to pay far less through discounters) and you can get more information from WordStar on 081-643 8866.

It's not much of a secret that Microsoft are working on a new version of Word which rumour has it will be due out by the end of this year. I would expect to see many more features included if the product is to compete with Lotus Ami and WordStar. The problem is, do we need all the features?

I'm typing this into Word for Windows and as I look at the menu bar I think how rarely I use some of the facilities offered now. They are all useful to some people (and I've used most of them at some time) and there are things missing which I want (for example, because I use PageMaker version 3 I can't import a Word for Windows file directly; I save it as Word for Dos and then bring it in. That's fine except that every time I save I have to tell it that I want it to use the Word for Dos format; it won't do it automatically). What do you think? Do you want word processors with ever more bells and whistles or do you want someone to say "Stop, just make it do the job quickly and without crashing" (I've just lost this article because Word crashed while I was saving it; thank goodness for Norton Unerase)

I know that it's possible to customise Word so that some of the menu choices don't appear, so making it less confusing, but that's hardly the point. I'd also like Word to check spellings better than it does; I have problems with it offering the same spelling for the word it wants to correct; e.g. suppose the word it doesn't like *automatic;* Word will offer this spelling as first choice and even if I add this to the dictionary, the next time I check the work it will still reject the word.

Excel 3 and Superbase are welcome on the network; I've not really done much with Superbase yet but I think it's promising. My big grumbles so far concern the network support. If I specify that I only want Read Only access to the file, why won't it read a read-only file? This is crucial on a network because I don't want students accidentally changing a file which I want them to search. The other problem is the passwords. I wish they weren't asked for when you create a new file (or, perhaps, were assigned by the Set menu). I know that some students will pick what seem like really good passwords and then forget them. There is then no way of accessing the data. Excel is superb; if you've not yet upgraded and you've got M series machines with 2Mb of memory then it's well worthwhile. It really is an easy to use package, capable of giving excellent results.

The next package I want in the library is a graphics package. The obvious choices (I think) are Corel Draw or Micrografx Designer although, again, both may be overkill for what I want to do. For example, in schools it may be that all you want to do is work with text to make it look eye-catching for posters etc. Corel does this superbly but does many other things as well. A program that, on paper, looks promising is Adobe TypeAlign. This works with Adobe Type Manager to create distorted, perspective or curved type. You can also change the grey level of the text or even set it in colour.

It runs under Windows (in standard mode so unfortunately it won't work on a PC186) and epxorts in Encapsulated PostScript (EPS) and Windows Metafile (WMF) formats amongst others so your masterpiece can easily be read in to other packages. Adobe Systems UK are at 10 Princeton Mews, 167-169 London Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 6PT.

John Williams has reviewed Page Plus from Serif in this issue. This offers some of the facilities that are needed to make text attractive in headlines or on posters and is very reasonably priced. Avagio version 2 seems to be a very powerful DTP package with a very wide range of facilities. It can import most popular text and graphics formats and work with them to produce impressive results. I hope to say more about it in the next issue. For more details contact LTS on 0386 792617.

The World Development Database from the Centre for World Development Education looks quite interesting. It contains data from more than 129 countries having a population of more than 1 million; some of the data is in general files and there is more specific data in files dealing with health, population and economics. There are 16 social and economic indicators, including life expectancy, infant mortality, population growth rate and school enrolment. The data files are in Grass format and can be bought as a single pack consisting of the user handbook, the World Bank's Development Data Book, including supplemental 1991 data sheet and data disc. This pack costs just £25 (and the software may be used on a network). Alternatively, a class set contains a further 9 copies of the data book and a copy of the data book teaching guide; this costs £55. The user handbook contains photocopiable worksheets and teachers' notes. Some of the work is aimed at maths departments as well as geography. All in all, an impressive sounding pack. Further details from Elizabeth Segall at CWDE Software on 071 831 3844.

Finally, in the last issue I commented that the magazine had got a rather technical flavour and I wondered if it was too much so. Only one person contacted me (and they said the level was about right). This month contains quite a lot of information about Windows 3 on the network; I think it's important that we share our knowledge about this major way of working. Please do let me know if you think that the magazine does not contain what you want. I don't expect you to write the articles you would like to see but it does help if you give me some idea of what you want or just let me know that you think that things are fine.

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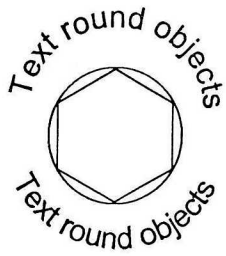
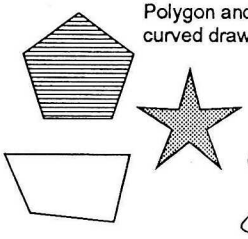
Desktop Publishing The Easy Way



Avagio 2 is a powerful yet easy-to-use DTP program with sophisticated facilities to rival much more expensive packages. Avagio 2 provides a comprehensive range of fully scaleable fonts on any type of printer without PostScript.

With Avagio you can automatically flow text over many pages to design a newsletter or manually and accurately place text and graphics on a single page to produce small documents. And at all times you can see exactly what you are doing on screen.



Avagio 2 is probably the most powerful and flexible DTP program available for the PC. It provides the most useful features of both PageMaker and CorelDraw (plus a few they don't have) without the burden of Windows.

Powerful DTP software for producing:

- **Work sheets**
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The Hewlett Packard DeskJet 500 - A Review.

Richard Naylor

Cheap ink-jet printers have, until relatively recently, had a mixed press. This has usually centred round the slow drying and easing smudging of the inks and the tendency of the ink to run. However I was drawn to consider ink-jet printers because I wanted a printer that could be produce high quality output and yet I could not justify the cost of a laser printer for personal use. On a visit to our local Hewlet Packard dealer I was shown the DeskJet 500 which impressed me so much that I purchased one straight away. A further encouragement for me to buy was the fact that a Scalable font printer driver with three fonts for Windows 3 was supplied.

The DeskJet 500 takes A4 paper front loaded on a fixed tray. Printed copy is brought out face up to the front on an upper tray. The mechanism keeps the page currently being printed suspended above the paper-out tray. When the page is complete it is dropped onto the previous pages below. This gives the previous page chance to dry. The ink dries very quickly and provided you do not grab the last page to eagerly you should have no problems with smudging.

Printing from Windows is, of course, slower than a laser printer as a bit image is being printed and the scalable font printer driver (ie the computer) is having to do a lot of work. The quality of output at 300 dpi is excellent and makes up for the slowness. Both portrait and landscape orientations are provided for.

If you use the printer from a DOS application then it behaves like a dot-matrix printer doing 240 cps in draft mode and 120 cps in letter quality. Very respectable indeed and with the enhanced quality. There are four built in fonts which can be printed at a number of pitches and point sizes. Additional fonts are available in cartridge form.

The printer is basically an oblong box in shape. All connections are made to slots underneath which means that the printer can be pushed tight up against the back of the desk or table. Parallel and serial interfaces come as standard. DIP switches for configuration are under the paper tray at the front. However if you are using the printer with RM's M-series machines there will be little to do other than connect it up.

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Internally the mechanism looks amazingly simple. The print cartridge holds the ink and is integral with the print jets. This is a disposable unit which lasts about 500 sheets of paper. On the front panel is a keypad which allows the selection of fonts and pitches as well as form feed. The printer also handles the HP Printer Control Language as well as emulating the Epson FX80.

The manual is simple and explanatory but sufficiently detailed for the technical. It explains that quality of output is paper dependent. I have found that standard photocopy paper gives good results but you may have to experiment.

All in all the printer is very impressive. It makes an excellent personal printer for letters and documents and anything including graphics. It would also suit well as a local printer attached to a departmental work station.

At around £300 +VAT (if you shop around) it is not that much more than a 24 pin dot-matrix. To my mind this printer relegates dot-matrix printers to listings printers only.

Richard Naylor can be contacted at Methodist College, 1 Malone Road , Belfast, BT9 6BY.

I'm also impressed with the DeskJet 500. As Richard says, the production of text using the scalable font driver is slow, but it's not impossible. If you compare the output of the printer with that from a PostScript laser then the print looks just as sharp; there are no discernible "jaggies" on the edges of characters. The print from a laser printer always looks slightly shiny (just like a photocopier) and the inkjet printout is matt but this really isn't important. The only difference is in the shapes of some characters; the font designs for a PostScript printer are copyright so Hewlett Packard can't use fonts which look exactly the same but their designs look perfectly good enough.

PagePlus from Serif

John Williams

The first time I heard mention of Page Plus was when it was reported in the computer press that Aldus were taking legal action against Serif Inc. to prevent them releasing their cut price DTP package. It was subsequentley reported that Serif had made some changes to the menu structure of their package and Aldus were now happy.

Having used PP for a few weeks I think happy was probably not the word being used at Aldus headquarters. Page Plus is NOT the worlds most polished bit of DTP software but for £99.00 +postage and VAT it represents far better value than any of the high powered (and priced) packages.

What do you get?
Four 3.5" and four 5.25" floppies both high density and containing the software compressed. When installed this liberates up to 8 Mbytes of software which includes a complete set of fonts and a generous selection of clip-art. You can opt to install less of the package but count on loosing 3 -4 Mbytes of your winchester. The facilities included are what you would expect from any DTP package but also include:-

1 The ability to rotate text to any angle. Eat you heart out PM4.

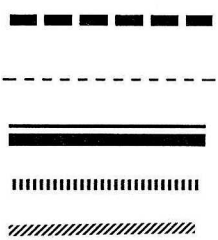
2 A unique properties panel that allows easy fine tuning of all effects both text and graphics.

3 A Pantone correct colour system for those who only had £99.00 left after buying the colour Postscript printer.

Are there any limitations?
Yes. For starters you are limited to one or two pages per file. It was written specially for Windows 3. There's no way it's going to work with earlier versions. The fonts supplied are bitmapped and whilst the driver tries to use your postscript fonts wherever possible any it can't match are down loaded making printing theoretically slower. Having said that I'm using a Starscript 4ppm laser and it doesn't seem too slow to me. I've read reviews that said it was slow to draw the screen. I'm using a 25MHz 386 and it's a darned sight faster than PageMaker 3 on a PC286. I tried it for a short while on the PC286 and found it acceptable, but then I've used Pagemaker over the network on a 186.

page plus sample

Line Types



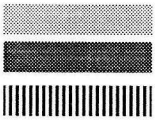
Fonts

BILLBOARD

Calligraphic

DIGITAL

Maximum rounding of corners



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Did I have any problems?
Yes, but once I knew they existed it was very easy to work around them. I first tried to install it on a PC286 and the Install program kept telling me that there were too many applications open in the 2Mb it was using all to itself. Serif having exchanged the disks to no effect, they then told me that they had had the same problem on an IBM Model 50. (The 286 is its clone.) The solution was to boot the computer with a DOS disk that had nothing more than Files and Buffers set in CONFIG.SYS. It worked. A friend reports that his slightly earlier version selects inches when you click on centimetres. It also suffers the occasional "unrecoverable application error", as do many Windows applications. There is an autosave feature and setting this to operate frequently prevents this problem being a disaster.

What about the PC186?
I haven't tried it yet, I need to clear 4Mb from a 20Mb winchester first, but Serif say it will run in 1Mb of RAM so I'm going to give it a try. Watch this space for news. The manual says it is "network neutral" which as far as I can understand means that if DOS and Windows work on your network then Page Plus will.

Documentation
This is the only place where you see evidence of the £99.00 price tag. It's a 200 page A5 paperback. If you are familiar with Windows applications then the manual is adequate, if you already use PageMaker you probably won't need to do any more than dip in for clarification occasionally. The style is light and enthusiastic. If Serif achieve all they promise, in the manual, to do in future developments then PagePlus is going places.

My Verdict
If you are looking for something to produce pamphlets and posters with more punch than you can get from your bundled copy of Pagemaker then Page Plus is worth looking at. It is only sold by mail order direct from Serif (Europe) Ltd on 0602 421502.

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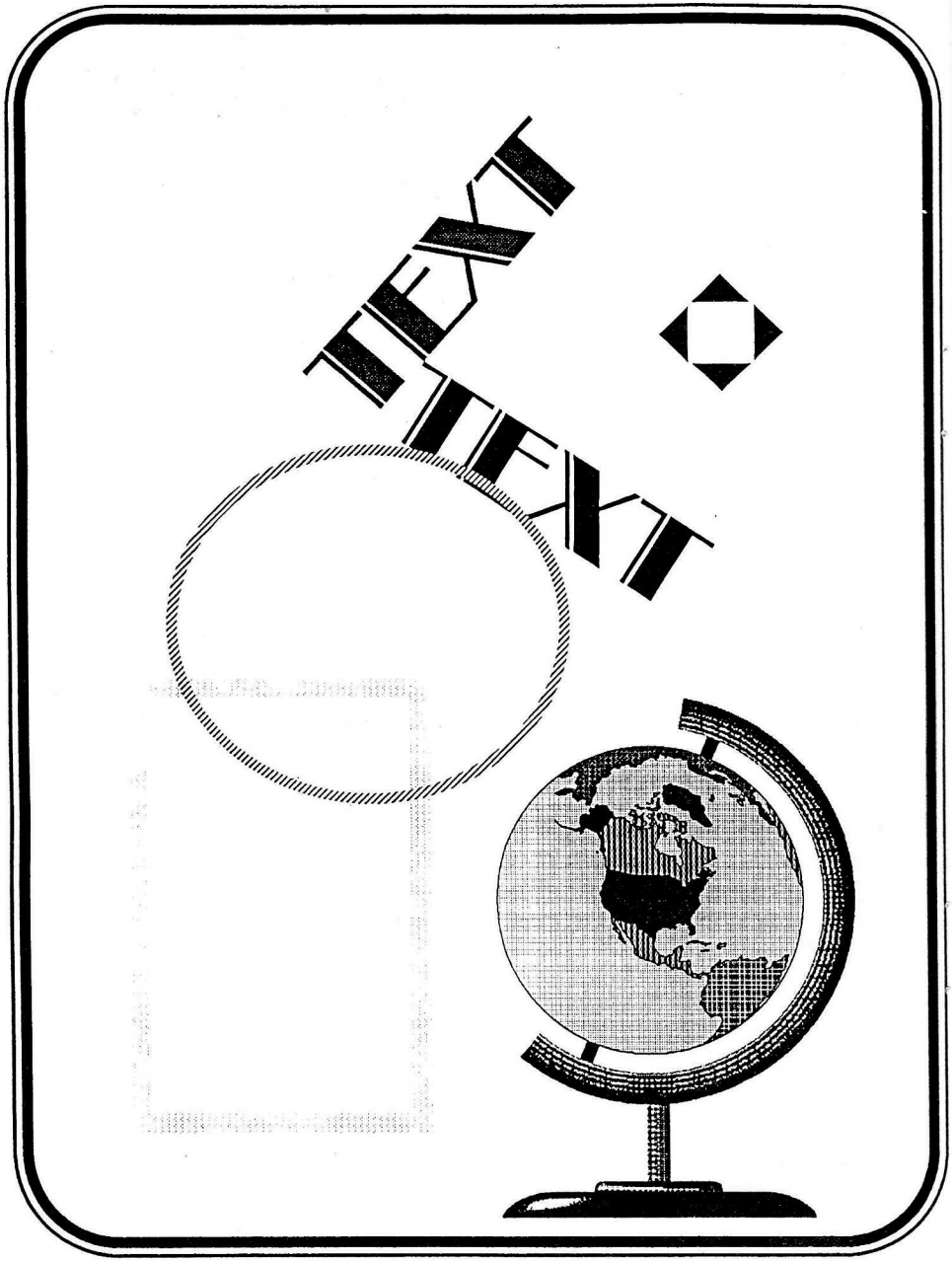

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The Perils of Upgrading

David Palmer

April: See advert. Order upgrade and Windows 3.

End of June: Phone to ask why it hasn't come and hear about July release date for the first. time.

July: Phone weekly to be told that it will be sent out next week.

August: Go on holiday - upgrade arrives. Have less than ten days to load it and get ready for new term. Installation seems OK until booting server when "Incorrect version of DOS" messages appear. Installation has failed. First of many calls to Customer Support. Only fix suggested is to redo the upgrade. Do so with same negative result. Go away. Redo again next morning and it works. Am now frustrated that I am offered icons for programs I don't have. Discover in catalogue that I could have upgraded my library. Phone and ask why I wasn't offered this as a suggestion when I placed my order. No joy. Eventually Barry Taylor fixes this for me - but apparently the library upgrade is not being shipped out yet.

September: Next problem is a user trying to print from Multiplan. Find I have to specify printer connection for every group and every secure user.

Moan. Why can't we change the name of a group of users from XNETMAN?

Next problem is a student trying to launch TYPIST from a blue screen menu. Track this down to toggle problem with new security switch. Add toggles to batch file but can't save it because ATTRIB.EXE in M:\PUBLIC won't switch off. No solutions from Customer Support this time. Go away. Next morning go into Windows 3 as manager and ask it to delete naughty attrib file. It works.

I have tried to set up Word Perfect to run from Windows but it claims it cannot find WP.FIL, even though I tell it where it is.

I think RM should issue a Windows 3 Manager's guide. The user's guide is a Good Book but I need more specific advice like how to adjust the groups offered to the students. There might be something in the supplementary handouts but they are not efficient to use (no index!)

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I am going to try Windows 3 for two weeks on my network of mainly 186, unexpanded machines, to see if it is practical. If it isn't then my students will have the option of returning to the old blue menu screens. I may be forced to accept the adage that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". I am convinced that Windows is a way forward but I wonder if RM will be man enough to admit that they have sold us a package which should be still at the **alpha** stage of development (i.e. the stage where it is being used by dealers and for testing and to remove bugs)

11 September '91

Yesterday spent hours trying to customise a group's options through WINMNG. Eventually discovered that the problem was caused by the ATTRIB file which I removed from the Public directory before. In trying to customise the groups for 186 use, the WINMNG is trying to use the 186 version of ATTRIB. Solution: log on to a 286. ATTRIB -R the directories I want to work on. Log off. Log on a 186. Use Winmng. Log off. Log on a 286 and ATTRIB +R the directories. Feel proud at solving the problem but today am put in my place when I try to print a BMP picture. It was made on my AX machine in standard mode and when I try to print it from there the machine crashes. Try to print from another 286 in real mode and it crashes. Delete the BMP file and create another in real mode. Halfway through, strange things start to happen. Bits of the picture disappear. Quit and restart Windows. Try to load Write to record these adventures It runs minimised. Insist that it grows up and load moan file. Cannot work in it because cannot move cursor. All attempts to do so just highlight blocks of text. Quit and restart. Same trouble. Open new file and write this. Print it and get miniature script at 17cpi. Call Customer Support and explain latest problems. First person admits there are problems with Paintbrush and even says Microsoft are trying to fix them. Offers some suggestions which sadly don't work. Call back and get another person who insists that all my problems are due to the fact that my laser printer, Siemens PT10 is non-standard, and that I won't get anywhere until I get a printer driver from them. I believe that my printer is 100% HP Laserjet compatible and it prints perfectly from any other program that uses an HP Laserjet driver. I go back to gnashing my teeth. I reload Write and root around in the menus and set my text to Courier. This produces a sensible printout. (I did like the 17cpi printout but hated the way the text slid backwards and forwards before wrapping).

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I had just started using Smartdrive before upgrading and was very impressed with it. I am not sure that it is functioning now although Customer Support say it should be because it is still in CONFIG.SYS. This is another big minus for the upgrade as far as I am concerned because I had got whole-class log-in times and hard disc spinning down to a minimum and both are now back up to an unacceptable level. What I now want to know more than anything else is whether I am the only one with these problems or are there lots of fellow sufferers?

David Palmer can be contacted at Ackworth School, Ackworth, Pontefract, WF7 7LT

See News and Editorial on page 5 for some of my comments on Net 3.1 and see the articles on managing Windows 3 for some ways of dealing with it.

The server now runs using Extended memory rather than Expanded memory. The change necessary for Smartdrive to work is to make sure the line in CONFIG.SYS does not have the /a switch; i.e. something like DEVICE=SMARTDRV.SYS 2048, **not** DEVICE=SMARTDRV.SYS /A 2048.

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Some utilities for RM Net 3.1 to ease Windows 3 management.

Phillip Fox

The following piece of code is designed to allow the easy duplication of windows configuration files from one group to a number of groups.

Copy this file into the WINMNG directory of the MGR directory to allow easy use.

The format of the instruction is

BULKGRP <source_group> <destination_group> (<destination_group>)

where <source_group> is the user group from which the configuration files are to copied and <destination_group> is the user group to which the configuration files are to copied. There must be at least one destination group but there may be as many as you wish all separated by a space. User groups should already have been defined using W3NEW-RG or W3NEW-UG.

```
ECHO OFF
REM Bulk update batch file
REM
REM Syntax: BULKGRP source-group dest-group (dest-group)
REM
REM source-group is the group from which windows details are to be
copied from.
REM dest-group is the group to which window details are to copied to.
REM
REM V1.0 25/9/91 Phillip Fox
REM
REM Check command line arguments, fail with suitable error message if
incorrect.
REM
IF $%1 == $ GOTO err1
IF $%2 == $ GOTO err2
IF not exist m:\public\win\rmnet\%1\groupdir GOTO err3
SET srcfiles=m:\public\win\rmnet\%1
:loop
SET dstfiles=m:\public\win\rmnet\%2
REM Check for existence of destination group
IF not exist %dstfiles%\groupdir GOTO baddest
ATTRIB -r %dstfiles%\*.*
REM Copy relevant files
FOR %%a in (win.ini control.ini progman.ini) do copy %srcfiles%\%%a
%dstfiles% >nul
FOR %%a in (grp gpc pc) do copy %srcfiles%\*.%%a %dstfiles% > nul
Echo Updated files in user group: %2
attrib +r %dstfiles%\*.*
```

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```
:cont
SHIFT
REM Check  for no further destination groups.
IF not $%2 == $ GOTO loop
GOTO exit

:err1
ECHO * BULKGRP requires a source group to copy from
ECHO *
GOTO exit

:err2
ECHO * BULKGRP requires a destination group to copy to
ECHO *
GOTO exit

:err3
ECHO * Source group incorrectly formed, check existence of group.
ECHO * %1
GOTO exit

:baddest
ECHO * Destination group %2 incorrect
ECHO * Has group been created with either W3NEW-RG or W3NEW-UG?
ECHO *
ECHO * Press Ctrl-C to cancel rest of batch file
ECHO * Any other key to continue.
pause
GOTO cont

:exit
set srcfiles=
set dstfiles=
```

As an alternative to W3NEW-RG and W3NEW-UG I felt that it would be often easier to create a new user group by copying the configuration files from another group which had a similar or even identical definition. The following piece of code does just that.

```
ECHO off
REM W3NEW-CG - Initialise a new group as a copy of an old group.
REM
REM Syntax: W3NEW-CG source-group dest-group (dest-group)
REM
REM source-group is the group from which details are to be copied
REM dest-group is the group to which window details are to copied to.
REM
REM The new group will be have the same restrictions as the original
REM V1.0 30/9/91 Phillip Fox
REM
REM Check command line arguments, fail with error message if incorrect.
REM
```

```
IF $%1 == $ GOTO err1
IF $%2 == $ GOTO err2
IF NOT exist m:\public\win\rmnet\%1\groupdir GOTO err3
IF exist m:\public\win\rmnet\%2\groupdir GOTO err4
SET srcfiles=m:\public\win\rmnet\%1
MD m:\public\win\rmnet\%2
COPY %srcfiles%\*.* m:\public\win\rmnet\%2
ATTRIB +r m:\public\win\rmnet\%2\*.*
GOTO exit

:err1
ECHO * W3NEW-CG requires a source group to copy from
ECHO *
GOTO exit

:err2
ECHO * W3NEW-CG requires a destination group to copy to
ECHO *
GOTO exit

:err3
ECHO * Source group incorrectly formed, check existence of group.
ECHO * %1
GOTO exit

:err4
ECHO * Destination group %2 already exists
ECHO * Delete all files from M:\PUBLIC\WIN\RMNET\%2
ECHO *The run this program again.

:exit
set srcfiles=
```

Remember that when you are typing in a batch file you do not need to include the REM statements; they are there for your benfit and are ignored by the computer. (Batch files also run faster without the REM statements).

Finally a plea from me. Does anyone know of a simple way of distributing new program configuration files to users who have not altered the original configuration even though they had the opportunity, and to identify those users who have altered their own configuration?

Phillip Fox may be contacted at 73 Parker Road, Horbury, Nr Wakefield WF4 5JR

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Portable Computing

David Palmer

This was my aim and manufacturers seem to agree that it is the way to go with a plethora of laptop and notebook models. As a classroom teacher, I didn't like the idea of a fence of screens between me and the students - and I knew that my colleagues wouldn't like it either - or the clack of typing keys. Then I came across the Agenda which offered me everything I wanted and some things I hadn't thought of. The computer can be called a palmtop since it is smaller than a paperback book. It has a tiny abc keyboard which can be used to enter text but it really takes off when you learn its Microwriting system. This allows you to enter text by pressing combinations of fingers of one hand which can be uploaded to a Mac, a PC or a Nimbus network. It can then be edited on a big screen (and sent back to the Agenda if needed). It can also be sent directly to a printer. In another blatant piece of elitism, Mac owners can even use the Agenda instead of the Mac keyboard.

The makers claim that you can master Microwriting in half an hour. I think that most children will be a bit quicker and most adults a bit slower. Network managers will share my biggest problem which was finding half an hour free in the first place!! The Agenda also offers diary and action list facilities and a simple yet powerful filing and searching system. Another simple but powerful feature is the manual. I wish all manuals could be as clear and useful. Failing that, I wish the Microwriting team would go into the business of rewriting other companies' instruction sets.

The Agenda normally comes with 32k memory but there are 64k and 128k models and memory cards for backing up your data. Function cards are appearing, the utilities and maths cards are both excellent. I am trying to raise funds to buy 60 machines, not unreasonable at a school discount price of £120 and in the meantime I am buying 10 at a time and recommending students to buy their own, something I will continue to push even if I get a hundred. I am not surprised that the Agenda won the British Design Award last year.

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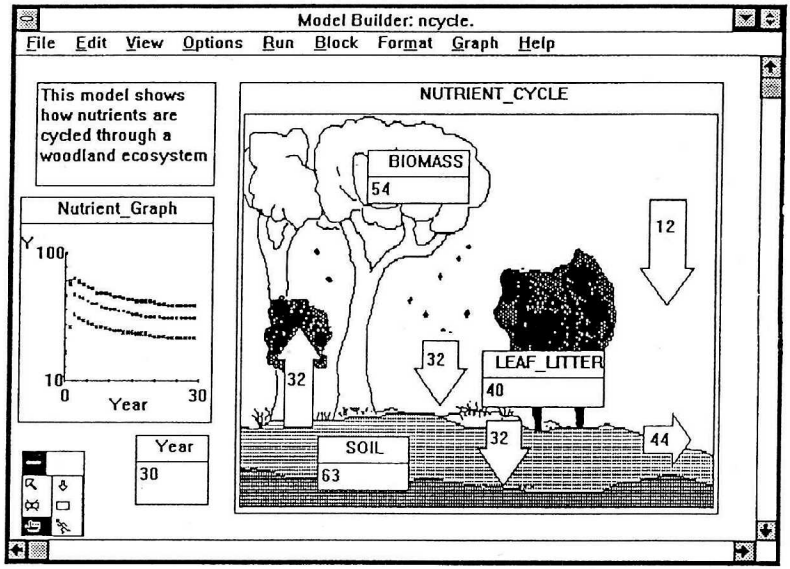
Model Builder



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Managing Windows 3 on Net 3.1

Stephen Rochford

Net 3.1 comes with a number of utilities to help manage the setup of Windows on the network. These are fine if you have a limited number of groups but are hard to use if you have a large number of users. For example, my network has 45 groups (one per form); to use the provided batch file would mean running it 45 times to update the settings for Windows. There has to be a better way!

As shipped, the network is set up with 2 special groups, GROUPR and GROUPW. The first is a restricted group and the second is unrestricted. For those who don't have Windows on the network, the unrestricted user gets access to Windows which looks exactly like a standalone version. The restricted version, however, does not allow use of the File New, Properties or Run commands (preventing access to software which you as network manager do not want the user to use) and the Program Manager groups are set up on the screen each time Windows starts in the way you as manager set them. I would strongly recommend making all your users restricted users; if you suffer from hackers this makes hacking well nigh impossible but most importantly for new users it makes it very difficult to get lost in the system. If you get confused simply log off and restart; Windows will be reset to the defaults chosen by the manager.

I have deleted the user identities from groups R and W and created my own groups (they are named GROUP01 to GROUP45; you'll see why the names are so unimaginative later). I have kept the GROUPR and GROUPW sub-directories in the manager's area and use these to control the default setting for all the groups. How is this done? When Windows starts it sets an environment variable, WINDIR, which contains the location where Windows should look for the INI and GRP files and where data should normally be saved. By typing

```
SET WINDIR=N:\WINMNG\TEMPLATE\GROUPR
```

and then starting Windows I ensure that all changes made are made in this directory. When you finish Windows you should makes sure that the default is not to save changes on exit from Program Manager. If you need to save changes you have made then exit so that changes are made, restart Windows and immediately exit, making sure that you do not save changes. When Windows finishes it is important to make sure that the PROGMAN.INI does not contain references to the manager's directory. There is a program provided for you to do this. Type:

```
CD N:\WINMNG\TEMPLATE\GROUPR
N:\WINMNG\FIXPMINI
```

(if you TYPE the PROGMAN.INI file before and after running FIXPMINI you will see what it does). You now have a set of files set up for the groups in the way you want them. How do you now get these to the proper places? When Windows starts for a restricted user it looks in the directory P:\WIN\RMNET\groupname for the necessary files so you must copy them there. The following batch file works:

```
FOR %%A IN (01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08) DO ATTRIB -R
M:\PUBLIC\WIN\RMNET\GROUP%A\*.*
FOR %%A IN (01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08) DO COPY
N:\WINMNG\TEMPLATE\GROUPR\*.GRP M:\PUBLIC\WIN\RMNET\GROUP%A
FOR %%A IN (01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08) DO COPY
N:\WINMNG\TEMPLATE\GROUPR\*.INI M:\PUBLIC\WIN\RMNET\GROUP%A
FOR %%A IN (01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08) DO ATTRIB +R
M:\PUBLIC\WIN\RMNET\GROUP%A\*.*
```

(Note that you only press Enter 4 times; each line starts with FOR)

The first line makes sure that the files in the public directory can be written over. The next two lines copy the group and initialisation files and the last lines sets the public files to read-only. Note the use of the variables in the brackets. DOS performs a substitution for each %A value so you copy to GROUP01, GROUP02 etc.; now you can see why I choose repetitive names rather than form names like 2Y, 2G, 3M etc.

When Windows finishes running for a restricted user it deletes all the GRP and INI files (whether you choose save changes or not). If Windows crashes or some obnoxious user exits by resetting the machine then these files are left behind. They are not needed and can safely be deleted. The following batch file helps:

```
FOR %%A IN (01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08) DO RMTREE DEL M:\GROUP%A\*.GRP /R /
E /Q
FOR %%A IN (01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08) DO RMTREE DEL M:\GROUP%A\*.INI /R /
E /Q
```

The /R deletes read-only files (they shouldn't be but ...), the /E makes sure that the directory isn't deleted even if it's empty and the /Q stops RMTREE asking if you're sure and displaying what it's doing.

The first time Windows runs it creates a TEMP directory off the user's own subdirectory. Again, if Windows finishes tidily it will delete the contents of this but adding the line:

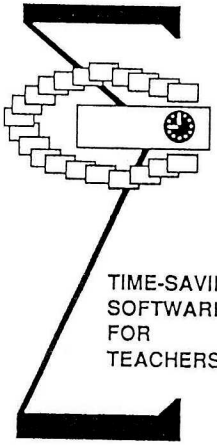
```
FOR %%A IN (01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08) DO RMTREE DEL M:\GROUP%A\*.TMP /R /
H /E
```

to the batch file above will help. Note the /H; I've found that something creates a hidden, read-only file (called ~WOA0000.TMP); I don't know what does it but it can be quite big and you don't need many of them to clutter up the network. NETDSK won't find them so you can have real problems! I've written a small program called WIPETMP which I use as a log on and log off program to clear the TMP files; send me a disc if you want a copy.

While we're on the subject of deleting unwanted files, you can safely delete the AUTOEXEC.BAT file from all the users' directories as long as you always remember the /E switch on RMTREE DEL (N.B. this switch is missing if you use the delete .BAK files from the Manager's default menu, use CONMENU to put it there!) If you look at the directory, they look as if they only take up 5 bytes but remember that disc space is allocated in clusters; this means a minimum of 2048 bytes per file and probably 4096 bytes. 1000 users at 4096 bytes for an unwanted file is a lot of space. The only problem with this is that NMS (the network management system available from Edhitec) puts all the AUTOEXEC files back if you edit the group (and NETMAN may do the same)

If you are desperate for disc space then you may want to delete the NORMAL.DOT and PMUKUSER.TXT files from each user's directory as they finish Windows. Again, they are not very big if you look at the directory but they do take up a lot of room because of the way clusters are allocated. PMUKUSER.TXT is the supplementary hyphenation dictionary for PageMaker. If you don't use prompted hyphenation then it will never be added to so there's not really any point in keeping it there. It does need to be there when PageMaker starts, however, otherwise a warning message is given. The NORMAL.DOT file may be wanted; it depends how your users use Word. It contains the styles for a document and any macros which you define. If you want to make sure that all users get the same appearance for their work then delete it at the end of a session and let it be copied back at the start of the next session.

Another major problem concerns printers. Windows only allows connections to 3 network printers (LPT1, LPT2 and LPT3). I want to make sure that when a user picks a particular kind of printer that it will actually connect over the network to the right physical device, without having to use Control Panel. Ideally, therefore, I want a device name for each printer and then at log on I make sure that LPT1 connects to a 9 pin Epson, LPT2 to a DeskJet 500 and so on. I've still not solved this problem and I'd welcome your ideas.



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NETLOG

Have you ever wished that you knew who had logged onto your network, on which machine, when they did it, and how long they were logged on for? If so, then NETLOG is possibly the answer to your needs. NETLOG maintains a log of currently-active users, and also writes a historic log containing all pertinent information about the session, even including the type of software used, if required.

Cost £25 per network.

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Striking the right note

Les Watson

The topic of whether or not Research Machines would produce a laptop computer has been a topic of conversation for the last three years at RM User Group conferences. If the company did, we reckoned, it would probably not be powerful enough to run educational packages that require RM's own Nimbus mode and would be priced sensibly. RM has clearly done some research into the laptop market and decided to give it a miss. Instead, it has made the jump from desktop machines straight into the "notebook" market.

The launch of the Research Machines NB range of notebooks computers is timed about right to capitalise on the likely growth in this sector of the PC market. In education the use of portable machines is minimal but will show considerable growth in the near future. Small portable machines are likely to become the norm in schools and colleges for a number of reasons. Rooms taken up by suites of desktop machines may not be the best way to make use of valuable teaching space. Having suites of portable machines makes more sense, allowing use to be made of "non-specialist" rooms and also helping to integrate IT into the school culture.

The machine I have been using is the NB220 model from the NB200 series. This has a 286 processor, a VGA quality screen which can display 32 levels of grey, a 20Mb hard disc and one megabyte of memory. There is also a built in floppy drive which can read both 720k and 1.44M discs. It is about the size of an A4 sheet of paper, two inches thick and weighs 6.5 pounds. The software bundled with the machine includes *Windows 3* and a copy of the *Flexiwrite* word processor (a newer version of the Oxfordshire *Write* word processor with a spell checker). There is also a battery charger and documentation for the notebook as well as for *Windows 3* and *Flexiwrite*.

The machine has a functional no-nonsense look about it, very much like some of the more popular commercial machines such as those from Compaq. It is solid and well constructed - if it were a car it would probably be a Volvo. They keyboard feels like any other computer keyboard, although the keys are squashed into a smaller space. The layout of the keys includes the usual portable computer trick of having a numeric pad available from the QWERTY set by holding down the Fn key. I found the keys a little cramped and kept catching the Caps Lock key and inadvertently typing in capitals, although I don't think this will be a problem with more adept typists or children with smaller fingers than mine.

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An annoying feature is the position of the right hand shift key which I found to be in the wrong place for me as I kept pushing the "up" cursor key instead. The keys are quite noisy and I think RM would have been better to use the softer keys now found on many notebooks, considering that this machine is likely to be used in places of study.

I had a mouse with the machine I used and although this is not included as standard it is really essential if Windows 3 is going to be the preferred interface for users. Perhaps RM should consider including one with the machine.

The screen is backlit and one of the best that I've seen on a notebook in this price range, giving excellent clarity. There are brightness and contrast controls, but it's not obvious where they are. I initially spent some time looking for them and inadvertently switched the power off in my search. They are in fact incorporated into the keyboard and accessed by holding the "Fn" key and pressing the appropriate number between 1 and 4. Once I'd located them I found that the screen had a good range of adjustment and I was able to use it easily in conditions ranging from bright sunlight to low lighting indoors.

There are ports available to connect the machine to most devices. These include connections for an external keypad, colour VGA monitor, and floppy disc drive, as well as the usual parallel and serial connectors and an external bus which will allow the addition of AT compatible cards. RM will provide low cost connections to RM Ethernet networks.

The removable, rechargeable battery has a life of three hours from full charge, depending on the amount of disc access. Built in power saving features such as screen and disc shutdown after a period of inactivity (which can be set by the user), ensure maximum use of battery power. It is also possible to put the machine on standby by pressing a standby charge switch which will cut down power consumption while you go and make some coffee and suspend your current work until you return.

You'll never miss the fact that power is getting low as the machine starts to beep at you and flash one of its LEDs with a persistence that you cannot ignore. I found this very annoying as it goes on for some time but I expect that RM thinks it important that children don't lose their work due to power failure as this would be very discouraging.

It is possible to change the rechargeable battery without losing your work as the machine has a second, internal non-removable battery which can keep it running for a short time. The removable battery can be charged in a few hours by connecting the machine to the mains with the battery charger supplied. It is also possible to use the machine while this charging is taking place. What schools need is a facility to charge several batteries at once, independently of the machine, freeing the notebook for use elsewhere. I understand that RM is investigating the possibility of supplying a charger for this purpose.

The machine runs Windows 3 surprisingly well, considering that it only has 1 megabyte of memory - RM tells me that it runs even better if an extra megabyte is installed. It is possible to upgrade the memory to 8 megabytes if needed. I wrote this review on the NB220 using Word for Windows (not supplied with the machine) and it performed much better than I expected. I also tried it with RM Logo, BBC Basic and other educational software which is not RM specific, and it all worked faultlessly. RM has been one of the leading proponents of Windows 3 and is fully exploiting the interface in all its latest products. A serious omission is that the machine has no handle. Ordinarily, this wouldn't worry me in a notebook, except that his machine is likely to get most of its use in schools and colleges where the user of the machine is not the owner, it seems remiss not to have included a safe way of carrying it. A carrying bag is available as an optional extra; this is essential and should have been included in the price.

The NB220 is excellent value for money. The machine is built to last and fits closely with the RM philosophy of being compatible with previous machines including the PC186. The inclusion of the Flexiwrite word processor ensures that the educational users have software to enable them to make use of the machine from the day it arrives. It is the only notebook on the market which can run in RM Mode and consequently make use of the wide range of educational software in schools. When this feature is combined with the possibility of linking to the company's network products, the machine looks certain to be a success.

To Win or not to Win - Windows 3 on a mixed Network.

Stuart Bondi

Net 3.1 has brought us Windows 3, and among many marvels there are a few new interesting problems to overcome. Part of the problem with managing Windows 3 over the network is that RM's documentation doesn't really explain the mechanics of its set-up over a network. To help manage the network I have tried to come to grips with it and there follows an outline of how it operates over the network, a few problems that I have been made aware of by colleagues in Devon, and some solutions and ideas. I have tried to be as accurate as my evolving understanding allows, but some statements maybe slightly incorrect and I would be most appreciative of correction to help get the story right.

When you run the appropriate W3new batch file, an appropriate group subdirectory is created on P:. This is set-up by using the read/write path that the netmgr automatically has of m:\public\win\rmnet. A number of files are copied to a new subdirectory, in addition to default .INI and .GRP files, up to two dummy files are added, one called GROUPNAME, the other (if appropriate) RESTRICT. Having set-up the master files, when you run winmng.bat these files are copied from their source to a temporary subdirectory on drive n:, from which they can be modified and then restored to the source directory. When the user logs in, RMNETWIN.COM is run and this carries out a number of checks to see that the system correctly initialises. Firstly, the group identity is checked on p: (p:\win\rmnet\groupname). If the user does not have a known directory then the default subdirectory files are used (P:\win\rmnet\default). If the subdirectory does exist, and if teh RESTRICT file is found, then the user is logged in as a restricted user.

When the user logs-in the .INI and .GRP files that the netmgr had previously created are copied to the users drive n:. The system "remembers" if the user is restricted and on exiting these files are deleted. If the user keyboard resets, or the computer is turned off, then obviously these files remain. Not to be defeated, RMNETWIN.COM sees these files on n: at log-in and overwrites them with the defaults from p:. If two or more computers log-in with the same ID, then (apart from possible sharing violation errors when files such as WIN.INI are read), when the first exits the .INI and .GRP files are deleted and the other user/s can be left "hanging". So the golden rule is one computer to one user!

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This isn't such a problem for unrestricted users (all our staff and some students who need to manage printers and get the most from Windows). Once .INI and .GRP files have been copied, they are not removed and the user can modify and so tailor Windows to their own requirements. The problem is that .GRP files determine the size of the group windows within the Program Manager. For restricted users, each session the appropriate .GRP files are copied over to suit the screen display of a PC186 or PC286/386 machine. For unrestricted users the .GRP files suited to a PC286 display will cause considerable distortion of the group windows on a PC186 machine, this works both ways. This is a documented problem in the release bulletin, but the solution involves procedures well beyond the average user. My solution has been to write a batch file to automate this process. It allows for a switch between machine types and will back-up and restore .INI and .GRP files appropriate for each machine type. The original win.bat file has been renamed as winrs.bat and is the standard batch file used for Restricted users, so their command processor line in Netman reads:

```
?:\command.com /cwinrs.
```

The batch file may need altering to suit your own set-up; if you send me a formatted disk and a SAE I will be happy to send you a copy to save typing it all out from scratch.

Program Manager size problems on 286/186

This is the meat of my article, but will only be of specific interest to users managing mixed networks. You still might like to read this through because of the suggestion of creating default configuration/initialisation files for users. There follows a listing, the numbers to the right refer to comments to follow below the listing and are NOT a part of the listing.
Notes:

1. The batch files on P: and Q: are the same except that the one on Q: starts @echo off instead of echo off.

2. I create default initialisation files for a variety of programs, ranging from mw.ini for Word, works.ini for Works, winword.ini for Word for Windows, to newspa.cfg for NewSpa. I copy these to a subdirectory on p: (p:\ini), and ensure that these are copied to the users drive n:. Most are write protected so that if the user changes settings within a session (eg a different print driver for a local printer), then when they start a new session I am sure that they have the default settings, such as the correct driver for the network printer. I do not write protect winword.ini, because one of the strengths of Word for Windows is its flexibility to allow the user to customise the program.

3. Dummy files are also stored in p:\ini and are copied to appropriate locations to indicate that an action has taken place (eg last use was on a PC186). In this particular line the dummy file is intended to protect an empty subdirectory from deletion when I use RMTREE every week to delete TeMPorary files.

4. Having checked the machine type, an appropriate dummy file is copied so that next session the batch file can determine whether a change of machine type has taken place. If you are using a PC386 you would need to add an appropriate line, but you would still copy the PC286 dummy file

```
(ie: if %MCTYPE%.==PC386 copy p:\ini\pc286.dum)
```

5. Before restoring my back-ups I must delete the .INI files that have been write protected. Otherwise the copy command fails at that point and subsequent files are not copied across.

Program Manager size problems on 286/186

This will only be of specific interest to users managing mixed networks. You still might like to read this through because of the suggestion of creating default configuration/initialisation files for users. If you would like the full listing (which would need some modification to suit your own system) then please send me a formatted disk and a SAE.

The principle of the batch file is to check the following:

1. Has the user previously used Windows, if so the set-up procedures can be skipped.

2. Is the user a group or a secure user; this is required in order to use the correct path for .INI and .GRP file backup and restore.

3. Has the user the correct default .INI and .CFG files that I have previously created and stored on p:\ini, if not these are copied and write-protected.

4. Has the user previously used Windows, if so then if the machine type is the same, then the program is loaded in the normal manner. If the machine type has changed, the Windows .INI and .GRP files are backed up, a check is made to see if the user has previous back-ups of .INI and .GRP files for the changed machine type - if so these are restored, if not the backed-up original files are deleted so that RMNETWIN.COM will copy the appropriate .INI and .GRP default files.

To test for previous use and machine types, appropriate dummy files are copied to n:. I create default initialisation files for a variety of programs, ranging from mw.ini for Word, works.ini for Works, winword.ini for Word for Windows, to newspa.cfg for NewSpa. I copy these to a subdirectory on p: (p:\ini), and ensure that these are copied to the users drive n:. Most are write protected so that if the user changes settings within a session (eg a different print driver for a local printer), then when they start a new session I am sure that they have the default settings, such as the correct driver for the network printer. I do not write protect winword.ini, because one of the strengths of Word for Windows is its flexibility to allow the user to customise the program. I have developed macros to automate the selection of printers and ports.

Firmware problems: 1.31D or earlier.
Some older PC186 computers are locking up when exiting Windows 3 or when issuing the Exit command, when run from net 3.1. This is apparently due to using older firmware (1.31D or earlier). Luckily Customer Support at RM can provide a software fix which will save people needing to buy a firmware upgrade. You may find that in certain circumstances firmware 1.32C also gives problems. If so, then installing the software fix may help.

Adding new unknown printers and toggle off.
I have recently been in receipt of Windows drivers for the integrex 132 injet colour printer. I had problems with the install option when running PRNTMNG.BAT as NETMGR. I tried to define the path for the driver as m:\public\win\system, but then the system tried to update this driver on p: , for which write access is not permitted. The solution is to type TOGGLE OFF at the n: prompt before running PRNTMNG. Windows can then "see" the driver and then does not try to alter it. Incidentally, all print drivers and icons for PC186 stations are not in the p:\win\system subdirectory, but the p:\win\sys186 subdirectory. You will notice that identical copies of print drivers are to be found in both subdirectories.

Word for Windows
I am really impressed with Word for Windows. The students find it very intuitive and the WYSIWYG function is great, although I recommend not altering the font until after the text has been generated. This significantly increases the speed at which the screen display works. When i have first run Prntmng I defined my server printer default page length as 11"..However, Winword's NORMAL.DOT settings come with the default of 11.69" (A4). I would recommend creating your own corrected NORMAL.DOT, and also a start-up WINWORD.INI file and replace the copy of NORMAL.DOT on drive p:. The WINWORD.INI file is also copied to the user subdirectory, and I have discussed this further above.

Tutorials will not run from drive p:, nor from a tutorial subdirectory on n:, but one named winword.cbt. Only one user should access the tutorials at once due to sharing violation errors, although you can copy the tutorials to a number of users drive n:'s (this is expensive on hard-disk space). What the documentation does not tell you about this is that if you run the software from a local hard-disk, you can delete the tutorial subdirectory having copied the files to a winword.cbt subdirectory, thus saving space.

Using the Printers Options pack

Our network can offer a laser printer and colour printer to users, these are located at stations. We use the printers option pack to make provision for spooling printjobs to print from these stations. In order to switch to an alternative printer, the user must run a batch file to "use" the printer, load the appropriate software and select the required print-driver. The average user often misses a step, resulting in the wrong driver sending garbage to the selected printer. To avoid this and to simplify things for the user, I have created macros. The macro offers a selection of "hot-keys" and options for printer and software to load.

These are some of the ideas that I have had from setting up and running Windows during the last 4 weeks. I hope that some of these ideas may be of use, be warned that I may probably bore you with more ideas in future articles. If you would like a copy of the mentioned batch file, or to discuss some of the issues raised here, please contact me at the address given below.

Stewart Bondi can be contacted at: St Thomas High School, Hatherleigh Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 9JU (0392) 54336, Ext 249

I haven't printed Stewart's batch file, partly because copying in listings is not really very sensible when you can get the file on disc for the price of a stamp and partly because even printed in 8 point Courier the file fills many pages! It is worth getting hold of, however, because it does show the way in which you can ensure that users do get the applications looking the way you want whether the user is on a PC186 or PC286. (This may sound like shades of Big Brother, but really it is a means of saving unnecessary problems for users.) Please let me know if you've found another way of managing a mixed network.

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Letter

In using a number of word processing programs I have yet to come across a facility which allows me to change the text from capitals to lower case as existed in Oxfordshire Write. Perhaps I haven't yet located it. I use Winword and Windows Write. It often happens that I begin typing in capitals by mistake and have to erase to correct. Any ideas?

I have mainly worked in primary schools and I used a cloze text program which was part of a program called Wordamatics available on 480z's. It was very useful in a reading programme I use with infant children. I have attempted to have it copied to Nimbus without success and have been told that there is no other program available, ie one in which I can type in a story and it will construct any number of cloze texts according to the frequency of the gaps one programmes. eg gap every ninth word gives nine different copies. Any ideas would really help my teaching. Our 480z's are now unreliable and obsolete.

I have used BACKUP to copy a large programme on to some discs. However, I seem unable to RESTORE the programmes. Any ideas?

In Write it is not possible to change case; in Winword just press SHIFT F3 with the text highlighted (for a single word, just put the cursor anywhere in the word). This will step through lower, UPPER and Proper form.

There is a program called Context available from EdHitec for £20 which has almost infinitely customisable cloze exercises and more besides. Contact Edhitec on 0423 871027.

Backup in MSDOS version 3 writes the files to disc with a 128 byte header; this is stripped off by restore. Unless you are good with debug there is no easy way of getting the files back. DOS 4 writes all the files into one big file, making it even harder to sort things out. A better bet is to buy one of the commercial backup utilities like Norton Backup or FastBack. They cost about £100 but if your data is valuable then they are well worthwhile.

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The Training Weekend

This year's training weekend will take place in Woolley Hall College, Near Wakefield from 25 to 27 October.

Unfortunately, there are no places left on the weekend so the information below is to give you a feel for what goes on at a weekend so that you can start thinking early about coming to next year's.

On Friday delegates will arrive and get a chance to meet fellow delegates and presenters. Dinner will be followed by a Key Note speech from RM then RM will be holding a surgery; your chance to meet some of the people whom you may have spoken to on the phone or ask all those niggling questions you've never had a chance to call about.

On Saturday there are 4 one and a half hour sessions, chosen from Network management (beginners and advanced), making the most of WIndows, Multi-Media PC presentation, Hyper-Media authoring, Superbase 4 and Advanced Excel. The day finishes with a further one and a half hour of Multi-Media presentations.

On Sunday there are another two one and a half hour courses, this time chosen from IT and the National Curriculum, Word for Windows, PageMaker and Design and A Level Computing. After lunch there is a final RM forum and then it's back home to get ready for work the next day.

There will also be presentations from Richard Horton and Richard Naylor on the Network Management System (NMS), Netlog and the MCB menus, from ILECC giving a preview of the National Curriculum Software packs and, hopefully, from Cumana talking about peripherals for the PC186.

During the rest of the time (who needs sleep, anyway) there is plenty of opportunity to get to grips with any problems you have because there is almost certainly someone there, either from RM or from the User Group, who can help.

There will, I hope, be some reports on how the weekend went in the next issue of the magazine.

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Writing for the Magazine

I welcome submissions for the magazine from anyone. You don't have to be a great writer to send something in; send a letter or a short tip for the Hints and Tips pages, everything is welcome.

This issue carries three articles on managing Windows on Net 3.1. This may be overkill but, as I said earlier, I think this is a topic where we need to share our knowledge. Is there something else about network management that you want to know? Let me know!

I'm still looking for more articles on using the Educational Software Library, particularly Excel 3 and Superbase. What are you doing? How have you set things up? How do you make the software available to users? What setup do you have for your Windows groups or menus?

If you are writing for me then the ideal is to send me a disc produced using Word or Word for Windows but I can cope with any word processor that runs on a Nimbus (I think!). If you are using a 480z then I can take WordStar, Oxfordshire Write or plain text files and if what you are sending is short then a letter on good old fashioned paper is fine.

Finally, we pay for published articles at the rate of £5 per printed page (although all payments are at the Editor's discretion).

Advertising in the Magazine

Full and half page advertisements can be placed in the magazine and details can be obtained from the Advertising Manager. We also take classified ads and members may place free ads for surplus equipment in MicroMart.

Rates

Back Cover **£100** Inside Cover **£60** Full Page **£50** Half Page **£30**

Classified **£5/100 words**

These rates assume black-on-white, camera ready copy. Please avoid dot-matrix output. Typesetting is charged at cost and is additional to the above rates. Classified ads must be pre-paid; cheques payable to RM User Group

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Micro Mart

For Sale
12 Z Net cards for Nimbus PC286

about 15 4m Z Net leads with crimped BNC connectors (from RM)

BNC T pieces to connect the leads to the boards

any reasonable offer accepted. These items are for sale following upgrade to Ethernet. They can be fitted to a standalone PC286 or PC386 to allow it to be connected to the network. I will split the set (i.e. you don't have to buy everything)

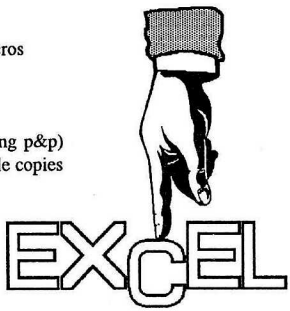
Contact:

Stephen Rochford at Latymer Upper School, King Street, London W6 9LR
Tel: 081 741 1851 (school) or 081 740 5642 (home)

Getting to Grips with EXCEL

Getting to Grips with EXCEL provides the ideal guide for those starting to use EXCEL. The guide is based on the experience of a large number of teachers and students and provides help on the use of EXCEL (Version 2 for both Mac and PC machines), with an introduction for the complete beginner andwith a range of useful techniques explained in detail. The booklet is well laid out, easy to use and has a good index for those unfamiliar with EXCEL terms and includes information on the following areas:

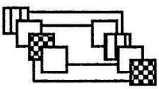
Getting started	Simple graphing	Printing
Formatting	Useful functions	Simple macros
Iteration	Sorting	Databases
More advanced graphing techniques		



Getting to Grips with EXCEL (68pp) costs £4.50 per copy (including p&p) although discounts for bulk purchases can be negotiated. Cheques for single copies should be made payable to "Hertfordshire County Council".

This booklet is the first publication from the Computer Based Modelling Across the Curriculum Project. This project is part of an I.T. programme to support teacher training sponsored by the TVEI Unit of the Employment Department.

Further details and orders from Dave Hassell, CBMAC,
Endymion Road, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 8AU.



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Membership Form

Please use capitals

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms _____

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I enclose a cheque payable to RMUG/order for £15 (£20 for overseas members). If you are not enclosing a cheque then please send an official order, indicating clearly to whom the invoice should be sent.

In order to serve our members better we like to know something about them and what they do with their computers. The information you give is confidential and we are registered as Data Users under the Data Protection Act.

Are your computers ☐ standalone ☐ networked

Please tick the areas in which you are interested.

☐ Word processing	☐ Spreadsheets	☐ Databases	☐ High Level Languages
☐ Education	☐ DTP	☐ Art/Graphics	☐ Low Level Languages
☐ Administration	☐ CAL	☐ CDT	☐ Communications
☐ Windows	☐ Other		

Please tick the best description of yourself or your institution

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☐ Middle School	☐ Secondary Sch	☐ 6th Form College	☐ FE College
☐ HE College	☐ Polytechnic	☐ University	☐ R&D
☐ Personal User	☐ Computer Centre	☐ Independent School	☐ Other

Please send your form to:
Stephen Rochford, RMUG Membership Secretary,
46 Ollgar Close, Shepherd's Bush, London W12 0NG

You may photocopy this form if you do not wish to cut your magazine.

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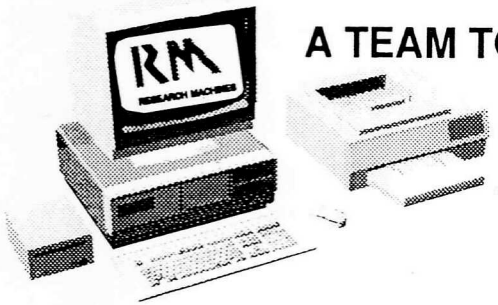

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